

# LEIGH HUNT'S LONDON JOURNAL.

TO ASSIST THE ENQUIRING, ANIMATE THE STRUGGLING, AND SYMPATHIZE WITH ALL.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 1835.

No. 53.

PRICE THREE HALFPENCE.

## SPRING.

THIS morning as we sat at breakfast, thinking of our present article, with our eyes fixed on a set of the British Poets, which stand us in stead of a prospect, there came by the window, from a child's voice, a cry of "Wall-flowers." There had just been a shower; sunshine had followed it; and the rain, the sun, the boy's voice, and the flowers, came all so prettily together upon the subject we were thinking of, that in taking one of his roots, we could not help fancying we had received a present from Nature herself,—with a penny for the bearer. There were thirty lumps of buds on this penny root; their beauty was yet to come; but the promise was there,—the new life,—the Spring,—and the rain-drops were on them, as if the sweet goddess had dipped her hand in some fountain, and sprinkled them for us by way of message; as who should say, "April and I are coming."

What a beautiful word is *Spring*! At least one fancies so, knowing the meaning of it, and being used to identify it with so many pleasant things. An Italian might find it harsh; and object to the *Sp* and the terminating consonant; but if he were a proper Italian, a man of fancy, the worthy countryman of Petrarch and Ariosto, we would convince him that the word was an excellent good word, crammed as full of beauty as a bud,—and that *S* had the whistling of the brooks in it, *p* and *r* the force and roughness of whatsoever is animated and picturesque, *ing* the singing of the birds, and the whole word the suddenness and salience of all that is lively, sprouting, and new—Spring, Spring-time, a Spring-green, a Spring of water—to Spring—Springal, a word for a young man, in old (that is, ever new) English poetry, which with many other words has gone out, because the youthfulness of our hearts has gone out,—to come back with better times, and the nine-hundredth number of the LONDON JOURNAL.

If our Italian, being very unlike an Italian, ill-natured and not open to pleasant conviction, should still object to our word, we would grow uncourteous in turn, and swear it was a better word than his *Prima-vera*,—which is what he calls Spring—*Prima-vera*, that is to say, the *first Vera*, or *Ver* of the Latins, the *Veer* (*Eng* Ionice) or *Ear* of the Greeks; and what that means, nobody very well knows. But why *Prima-Vera*? and what is *Seconda*, or second *Vera*? The word is too long and lazy, as well as obscure, compared with our brisk little, potent, obvious, and leaping *Spring*,—full of all fountains, buds, birds, sweet-briars, and sunbeams.

"Leaping, like wanton kids in pleasant spring," says the poet, speaking of the "wood-born people" that flocked about fair Serena. How much better the word *spring* suits here with the word *leaping*, than if it had been *prima-vera*! How much more sudden

and starting, like the boundings of the kids! *Prima-vera* is a beautiful word; let us not gainsay it; but it is more suitable to the maturity, than to the very *springing* of *spring*, as its first syllable would pretend. So long and comparatively languid a word ought to belong to that side of the season which is next to summer. *Ver*, the Latin word, is better,—or rather Greek word; for as we have shown before, it comes from the Greek,—like almost every good thing in Latin. It is a pity one does not know what it means; for the Greeks had "good meanings" (as Sir Hugh Evans would say); and their *Ver*, *Veer*, or *Ear*, we may be sure, meant something pleasant,—possibly the rising of the sap; or something connected with the new air; or with love; for etymologists, with their happy facilities, might bring it from the roots of such words. Ben Jonson has made a beautiful name of its adjective (*Earinos*, vernal) for the heroine of his 'Sad Shepherd,'—

"Earine,"

Who had her very being, and her name,  
With the first knots, or buddings of the Spring;  
Born with the primrose and the violet,  
Or earliest roses blown; when Cupid smiled,  
And Venus led the Graces out to dance;  
And all the flowers and sweets in Nature's lap  
Leap'd out."

The lightest thoughts have their roots in gravity, and the most fugitive colours of the world are set off by the mighty back-ground of eternity. One of the greatest pleasures of so light and airy a thing as the vernal season arises from the consciousness that the world is young again; that the spring has come round, that we shall not all cease, and be no world. Nature has begun again, and not begun for nothing. One fancies somehow that she could not have the heart to put a stop to us in April or May. She may pluck away a poor little life here and there; nay, many blossoms of youth,—but not all,—not the whole garden of life. She prunes, but does not destroy. If she did,—if she were in the mind to have done with us,—to look upon us as an experiment not worth going on with, as a set of ungenial and obstinate compounds which refused to co-operate in her sweet designs, and could not be made to answer in the working,—depend upon it she would take pity on our incapability and bad humours, and conveniently quash us in some dismal, sullen winter's day, just at the natural dying of the year, most likely in November; for Christmas is a sort of Spring itself, a winter-flowering. We care nothing for arguments about storms, earthquakes, or other apparently unseasonable interruptions of our pleasures:—we imitate, in that respect, the magnanimous indifference, or what appears such, of the Great Mother herself, knowing that she means us the best in the *gross*;—and also

that we may all get our remedies for these evils in time, if we co-operate as before said. People in South America for instance, may learn from experience, and *build* so as to make a comparative nothing of those rockings of the ground. It is of the *gross* itself that we speak; and sure we are, that with an eye to *that*, Nature does not feel as Pope ventures to say she does, or sees "with equal eye"—

"Atoms or systems into ruin hurl'd,  
And now a bubble burst, and now a world."

He may have flattered himself that he should think it a fine thing for his little poetship to sit upon a star, and look grand in his own eyes, from an eye so very dispassionate; but Nature, who is the author of passion, and joy, and sorrow, does not look upon animate and inanimate, depend upon it, with the same want of sympathy. "A world" full of loves, and hopes, and endeavours, and of her own life and loveliness, is a far greater thing in her eyes, rest assured, than a "bubble;" and, *à fortiori*, many worlds, or a "system," far greater than the "atom" talked of with so much complacency by this divine little whipper-snapper. *Ergo*, the moment the kind mother gives promise of a renewed year with these her green and budding signals, be certain she is not going to falsify them; and that being sure of April, we are sure as far as November. As to our existence any further, that, we conceive, depends somewhat upon how we behave ourselves; and therefore we would exhort everybody to do their best for the earth, and all that is upon it, in order that it and they may be thought worth continuance.

What! shall we be put into a beautiful garden, and turn up our noses at it, and call it a "vale of tears," and all sorts of bad names (helping thereby to make it so), and yet confidently reckon that Nature will never shut it up, and have done with it, or set about forming a better stock of inhabitants? Recollect, we beseech you, dear "Lord Worldly Wiseman," and you, "Sir Having," and my lady "Greedy," that there is reason for supposing that man was not always an inhabitant of this very fashionable world, and somewhat larger globe; and that perhaps the resident before him was only of an inferior species to ourselves (odd as you may think it), who could not be brought to know what a beautiful place he lived in, and so had another chance given him in a different shape. Good heavens! If there were none but mere ladies and gentlemen, and city-men, and soldiers, upon earth, and no poets, readers, and milk-maids to remind us that there was such a thing as Nature, we really should begin to tremble for Almack's and Change Alley about the 20th of next October!

### HOW ARE WE TO GET HAPPILY MARRIED?

THIS is really a very interesting question. A truce then for the next five minutes to politics; let the Whigs and the Tories worry each other as much as they please, but let us, taking no heed to the state of Parliament, think a little about our domestic affairs.

Since everybody marries—or may marry—I had almost said, ought to marry, it is surely worth considering what the necessary conditions may be for obtaining that which, I take it for granted, everyone promises himself in marrying, namely, an increased degree of comfort and happiness. I may be told that it is not only quite idle, but that it smacks a little of presumption, to pretend to instruct people in the road to felicity; that everyone judges pretty correctly in what relates to himself, and therefore may be safely left to work out his own happiness, after his own manner. I have only to say, that I disclaim all idea of teaching; I only wish to rouse attention to the importance of a subject that nearly concerns the well-being of every member of the great human family.

However knowing people may be in every-day and worldly matters, I am not disposed to admit that they are so clever in the management of this affair of matrimony, as is commonly imagined. Every person, male or female, has the power of determining for himself the two material and preliminary questions:—firstly, whether he will be married or not? secondly (if the first be answered affirmatively), to whom will he be married?

Having this power, then, if people knew what was good for them, there would be no unhappy marriages; but there are unhappy marriages: therefore they do not know what is good for them. Not only are there some unhappy marriages, but there are unfortunately a great many—in short, it is no use blinking the question, there is scarcely one in a hundred that is otherwise. Matrons, with a large family of daughters to establish, may bristle up, and look feline at such an insinuation, and their husbands loudly and fiercely deny it. This is but natural; they have got into a scrape, and would fain have companions in misfortune.

I hope no one suspects me of a design to treat this subject with levity. If anything I may have dropt has given rise to this impression, I am sorry for it—the intention is farthest from my thoughts. It is too sad a subject to be discussed for the sake of amusement; if one jests upon it, he but acts like the child who grins to conceal the fact that he is weeping.

But to resume. This cat-and-dog like state of things,—this universal misery, is owing, in many cases, not to the error of judgment, which we shall presently have to consider, but to not judging at all. I heard, the other day, of a man, in a humble walk of life, who married a woman for no other earthly reason (according to his own admission) than because she had a pretty foot and ankle!—she was, otherwise, both physically and morally deformed.

I knew a young lady, who was led to the altar from a boarding-school, and who confessed, that she became a wife in order that she might be at liberty to lie in bed as long as she pleased in the morning, and have buttered toast for breakfast! People of the world would laugh no doubt at the idea of being actuated by motives so whimsically absurd. But let us see if they act a whit more wisely themselves. It cannot be denied that some of them marry exclusively for wealth. This is to fall into the mistake of the man who, finding that an apple pie was improved by the addition of a quince, caused a pie to be made intirely of quinces. Others are attracted by personal beauty. This is no better. Voyagers tell us that, though, when first they near the shores of India, their senses are intoxicated by the delicious odours of the flowers with which the land is covered; yet, in a short time, they not only regard this fragrance with indifference, but cease altogether to perceive it.

It may be said, that all this is nothing to the purpose; that these are people who do not exercise their reasoning faculties, and have no business to expect to be happy.

It may be so. There are others, certainly, who, despising alike beauty, and silver, and gold, know that there is something else more necessary to happiness in the married state, and take great pains to obtain it; but, as these pains are so often taken in vain, we must suppose that the efforts are applied in a wrong direction.

The fact is one of every day observation, that there are many very amiable people, endowed apparently with every requisite for making themselves and others happy, but who, nevertheless, being inconsiderately joined together, are not so. They are resigned, but not happy. They do not make a display of their wretchedness, like the beggar who exposes his ulcer to excite the pity of the crowd; on the contrary, they keep a strict watch over themselves lest the fatal secret should escape—but it is not—it cannot be hidden. Of course they never quarrel—they have too much good sense—too much proper pride; besides, it would not be worth while! In spite of all their evenness of temper and mental discipline, there is still some unaccountable jar, and dissonance in their social being—like certain musical instruments, which most betray the imperfection of their construction, when the chords are perfectly in tune. Reflecting upon this, is it not fair to conclude that some fundamental error has crept into all the calculations of reason upon this subject, and vitiated the whole process? It is; and this error lies, I firmly believe, in the prevailing notion that, in a partner for life, we should require, before all things, a similarity of tastes, habits, and disposition. This I take to be the fatal mistake, and so long as it is persisted in, I see no end to the evil. My belief is, that the continuation of a perfectly good understanding between husband and wife—an understanding that will bear the wear and tear of the world—depends upon their being distinguished from each other by the possession of *opposite qualities*—upon their being as *unlike* each other as possible.

The common opinion referred to may have arisen from observing that a similarity of tastes, habits, and dispositions (whether good or bad) is apt to draw young people of different sexes together, and give birth to love, or something resembling it; and there is said to be sympathy between them. But this love has no stamina, no quality of endurance; and as to the sympathy, the less we have to do with it, perhaps, the better.

I do not attach much value to proverbial sayings and saws, otherwise it would not be difficult to adduce a good many that appear to bear me out; such, for example, as, "Love matches are seldom happy ones;" and "In marrying, it is best to begin with a little aversion," &c. I only mention these here to show that I am urging no new-fangled theory—the principle is known, but disregarded.

To make myself better understood, I will relate an old nursery tale:—

It chanced, that once upon a time, a small stream that crossed a public road, became so swollen by continued rains as to assume almost the appearance of a river; and so, as it was no longer possible to step across it as heretofore, loose stones were placed so as to form a sort of cause-way from side to side. The first travellers who approached after these things had happened, were two who were both lame alike, and who had joined company somewhere on the road, and agreed to travel together. Well, when they got to the edge of the water-course, they endeavoured to cross by the stepping stones, but this they found to be no easy matter; being both lame, each had enough to do to take care of himself, and could lend no help to the other. The result was that they both fell into the water, and were obliged to wade to the opposite side, where they continued their journey, grumbling at the stream and at each other. The next who attempted the passage, were two travellers who were both blind, and who met with a similar mishap. Just as these last were scrambling out of the water, there came up two others of a more promising appearance: they were both young, strong, and full of spirits, and you would have supposed that so trifling an impediment in their way, as the brook, would have been

easily surmounted; but they shared no better fate than their predecessors. Too self-subsistent—too independent of each other—each confided in his own strength and dexterity, and scorned to receive while he thought it unnecessary to offer assistance. Thus, rushing together upon the narrow and uneven path, they jostled violently on the way, and were, like the others, precipitated into the stream. The story goes on to say, that the next who came up, and who were the first who succeeded in reaching the opposite side without accident, were two way-farers who had travelled a long way very cheerfully together. One was tall, strong, and active, but quite blind; the other was, on the contrary, of a diminutive and feeble frame, but his eyes were piercing as the falcon's.

They advanced without hesitation to pass the stream; for they knew that, though neither singly could accomplish the task, yet, together, and confiding in each other, no harm could come to them; the blind one relying upon his bright-eyed companion to point out the best places, whereupon he might set his feet, and the weak-one feeling quite sure that his strong friend would never, for his own sake, release the firm grasp with which he hugged him to his side.

The drift and moral of this story will, from what has been already said, be sufficiently obvious. We are most of us, indeed, feeble or dim-sighted creatures, not formed to stand alone, or buffet along the rugged path of life without some friendly shoulder to lean on—some arm to cling to. We must select, then, a companion by whose side to toil—always bearing in mind, at the same time, that as it is impossible, so is it quite unnecessary, that our fellow pilgrim should be altogether free from infirmity and error. All that is necessary is, that he should not be obnoxious to the *same* infirmities, errors, and prejudices as ourselves—that he should so far form a contrast to ourselves, as to be strong, precisely in those points where we are weak, and weak where we are strong; in order that a want and a consciousness of mutual support and assistance, be constantly present to both.

F. C. M.

\*\*\* Our correspondent has started an interesting but perplexing subject for reflection; and will not wonder if we think he has failed, like others, in cutting the Gordian knot. The fable he has told, alas! will hardly enable the morally and intellectually infirm to discover, much less to acknowledge their respective deficiencies. The question between the conflicting parties will still be, which is the lame or the blind, and which has the greater need of the other's assistance.

### ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

LXIV.—WILLIAM AND CATHERINE SHAW.

[WE take this edifying sample of Circumstantial Evidence from the 'Sixty Curious Narratives' (before-mentioned), the compiler of which quotes it from the 'Theory of Presumptive Proof.' Presumptive proof is really a very presumptuous personage, and his circumstantial evidence frequently deserves to have a halter brought round its own neck. People circumstantially found guilty ought, we think, at the very worst, to undergo only a circumstantial hanging. A gallows should be peraded round them; the executioner should make a circuitous pretence of turning them off; and the bystanders should exclaim, "There you are, not positively hung—but you are circumstantially;—you may presume that you are dead;—the proof of your being so is not direct; but strong symptoms of an execution are round about you;—you may say that you have been in very hanging circumstances."

We take poor William Shaw to have been no very pleasant father; and his unfortunate daughter (perhaps in consequence of a violent bringing-up) was furious and vindictive. But their characters must have been known;—a surgeon should have been able to distinguish between a throat cut by the deceased's own hand, and by that of another person; and the groans and exclamations of a highly probable suicide ought not to have been construed into evidence



of murder, not even with a shirt spotted with blood, especially as the spots turn out to have been owing to what the man said. But the simpletons kill him, and then wave a flag over his grave, by way of consoling his innocence! There is something in this action ludicrously of a piece with the rest of the folly; though the instinct was a good one, and the poor people must have been very sorry. We believe there will be no great haste to hang any more criminals upon circumstantial evidence, after the publication of works of this kind, and the fate of the unfortunate Eliza Fenning.]

WILLIAM SHAW (says our authority) was an upholsterer at Edinburgh, in the year 1721. He had a daughter, Catherine Shaw, who lived with him. She encouraged the addresses of John Lawson, a jeweller, to whom William Shaw declared the most insuperable objections, alleging him to be a profligate young man, addicted to every kind of dissipation. He was forbidden the house; but the daughter continuing to see him clandestinely, the father, on the discovery, kept her strictly confined.

William Shaw had, for some time, pressed his daughter to receive the addresses of a son of Alexander Robertson, a friend and neighbour; and one evening, being very urgent with her thereon, she peremptorily refused, declaring she preferred death to being young Robertson's wife. The father grew enraged, and the daughter more positive; so that the most passionate expressions arose on both sides, and the words, *barbarity*, *cruelty*, and *death*, were frequently pronounced by the daughter! At length he left her, locking the door after him.

The greatest part of the buildings at Edinburgh are formed on the plan of the chambers in our inns of court; so that many families inhabit rooms on the same floor, having all one common staircase. William Shaw dwelt in one of these, and a single partition only divided his apartment from that of James Morrison, a watch-case maker. This man had indistinctly overheard the conversation and quarrel between Catherine Shaw and her father, but was particularly struck with the repetition of the above words, she having pronounced them loudly and emphatically! For some little time after the father was gone out, all was silent, but presently Morrison heard several groans from the daughter. 'Alarmed,' he ran to some of his neighbours under the same roof. These, entering Morrison's room, and listening attentively, not only heard the groans, but distinctly heard Catherine Shaw, two or three times, faintly exclaim—"Cruel father, thou art the cause of my death!" Struck with this, they flew to the door of Shaw's apartment; they knocked—no answer was given. The knocking was still repeated—still no answer. Suspicions had before arisen against the father; they were now confirmed: a constable was procured, an entrance forced; Catherine was found weltering in her blood, and the fatal knife by her side! She was alive, but speechless; but, on questioning her as to owing her death to her father, was just able to make a motion with her head, apparently in the affirmative, and expired.

Just at the critical moment, William Shaw returns and enters the room. All eyes are on him! He sees his neighbours and a constable in his apartment, and seems much disordered thereat; but, at the sight of his daughter he turns pale, trembles, and is ready to sink. The first surprise, and the succeeding horror, leave little doubt of his guilt in the breasts of the beholders; and even that little is done away on the constable discovering that the shirt of William Shaw is bloody.

He was instantly hurried before a magistrate, and, upon the depositions of all the parties, committed to prison on suspicion. He was shortly after brought to trial, when, in his defence, he acknowledged the having confined his daughter to prevent her intercourse with Lawson; that he had frequently insisted on her marrying Robertson; and that he had quarrelled with her on the subject the evening she was found murdered, as the witness Morrison had deposed: but he averred, that he left his daughter unharmed and untouched; and that the blood found

upon his shirt was there in consequence of his having bled himself some days before, and the bandage becoming untied. These assertions did not weigh a feather with the jury, when opposed to the strong circumstantial evidence of the daughter's expressions, of "barbarity, cruelty, death," and of "cruel father, thou art the cause of my death,"—together with that apparently affirmative motion with her head, and of the blood so seemingly providentially discovered on the father's shirt. On these several concurring circumstances, was William Shaw found guilty, was executed, and was hanged in chains, at Leith Walk, in November 1721.

Was there a person in Edinburgh who believed the father guiltless? No, not one! notwithstanding his latest words at the gallows were, "I am innocent of my daughter's murder." But in August 1722, as a man, who had become the possessor of the late William Shaw's apartments, was rummaging by chance in the chamber where Catherine Shaw died, he accidentally perceived a paper fallen into a cavity on one side of the chimney. It was folded as a letter, which, on opening, contained the following:—"Barbarous Father, your cruelty in having put it out of my power ever to join my fate to that of the only man I could love, and tyrannically insisting upon my marrying one whom I always hated, has made me form a resolution to put an end to an existence which is become a burthen to me. I doubt not I shall find mercy in another world; for sure no benevolent Being can require that I should any longer live in torment to myself in this! My death I lay to your charge: when you read this, consider yourself as the inhuman wretch that plunged the murderous knife into the bosom of the unhappy—CATHERINE SHAW."

This letter being shown, the hand-writing was recognized and avowed to be Catherine Shaw's by many of her relations and friends. It became the public talk; and the magistracy of Edinburgh, on a scrutiny, being convinced of its authenticity, they ordered the body of William Shaw to be taken from the gibbet, and given to his family for interment; and, as the only reparation to his memory and the honour of his surviving relations, they caused a pair of colours to be waved over his grave, in token of his innocence.

## THOUGHTS ON LANGUAGE.

BY EGERTON WEBBE.

NO II.

I do not think that anything I have advanced, or mean to advance, on the subject of language, will give umbrage either to the philologist or to the poet. With the former I agree in loving his study, though little qualified to estimate its beauties, or do justice to its importance. With the latter, I share his gratitude towards the eloquent "interpreter," the great organ of the reason and the imagination, without which we were little distinguishable from the beasts of the field; *with* which we are what we are, and may be what we would. But I think we are too apt to transfer to the account of language praises that belong of right to the understanding; only, and to conceive, when some remote and exquisite object is brought suddenly, and as if by miracle, into the focus of our perception by nothing more than a single stroke of the poetic wand, that the magic is in the language, and not in ourselves; and then, on the other hand, we deal with it too much as with a favorite; and because it is our perpetual companion and helpmate, and flatters us with its ready services, we are blind to, or reluctantly admit, its manifold offences and incorrigible defects.

In my last chapter I considered a few of these of the more obvious kind, and, I propose to push those considerations somewhat further hereafter. But, in the meantime, perhaps a few observations on the origin of language will not be unacceptable to the Reader. I will therefore beg him to consider me here (to compare great things with small) as working after the manner of the epic poets, who, at first setting out, rush into the middle of things, but pre-

sently take occasion to relate some circumstances of a previous date, proper for the Reader to know, though not equally suitable for an exordium.

Little can be gathered concerning the origin of language; and, fortunately, the question is not one of much practical importance, though a curious subject for conjecture. The favorite theory, that words at first were imitative sounds, suggested by the nature and properties of their objects, is plausible, but, except in a very limited sense, I venture to think not well founded. That a rushing stream should receive a name significant of the quality of its sound, or that the voices of birds and other animals, as well as the noise of winds, of the sea, of thunder, &c., should give rise to words imitative of their different tones and modulations, it is not difficult to suppose. But your naked savage has something else to do than to invoke nightingales and soliloquise on waterfalls; he has to cut his daily faggot from a tree that says nothing—to prepare his meal on some "silent stone." Let us, indeed, make every reasonable allowance for analogy and the association of ideas; let us grant it possible that some of the nice metaphysical relations existing between sound and sight—sound and touch, &c., may have been seized upon by the mind, and turned to account in language, even in the earliest stage (though Professor Porson tells us that our first fathers were plain men who "called a spade a spade"); still, allowing all this, can we suppose that the whole of inanimate nature was christened after this manner?—that the most hidden and subtle properties of things, in this way, became their title to a name, among savages? But, it may be said, there are few substantive things which do not produce some kind of sounds when put into motion. This is true, but to proceed on this ground, we must needs assume that such evidences in every case preceded the nomenclature. But would the tree be sure to receive its appellation in a high wind? would there be no allusion to the stone before it was heard whizzing through the air? would the faggots remain anonymous till they crackled in the fire?

If I cannot agree with the assertors of an imitative origin, neither can I assent to the opinion of those who save themselves a world of difficulty, while, at the same time, they throw an air of sanctity over their cause, by making language a matter of divine revelation. And I dissent, not merely because there is no authority for such an opinion, that I am aware of, in the Mosaic history, nor because the following verse in Genesis (chap. ii. v. 19) would seem pretty plainly to announce the contrary—

"And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof"—

but I dissent, partly for the reason already urged by those who have combated on the same side, viz. that if language had been a direct gift from God, it would have been a perfect instrument, or one at least of much greater perfection than it is or ever has been (to which may be added, that it would have been most perfect in its beginning, and would rather have lost than gained power as it descended from its first possessors, whereas the reverse is the fact), and partly, because I do not see the *dignus vindice nodus*. For is there not a much simpler account of the origin of language, nearer home? Observe a little baby at the age when it first begins to be sensible that it has a tongue. How it delights to rattle out a succession of easy syllables, without any other object or meaning than its own amusement. It talks to its coral, it talks to its cradle, every new object excites it to talk. Do we not see in this an evidence of a strong natural instinct? If this were merely an act of imitation consequent upon hearing the voices of grown people, it would be accompanied with other acts of imitation provoked in a similar manner. But this chattering, and this articulation of syllables, takes place long before the development of any regular power of observation. Now the instinct of the child is so soon adulterated, so soon lost and huddled up

with the movements of experience and the effects of example, that we can, as it were, only snatch a transient and imperfect glimpse of Nature as she here momentarily appears to us. And yet this glimpse, I think, is sufficient to set our doubts at rest on one or two points. It may satisfy us, perhaps,—

1st. That we are sent into the world with the seeds of this faculty within us, and that it is as much a part of our instinct to use the tongue and the voice in those articulations and inflexions that have their accomplishment in speech, as it is to apply the hands, the arms, the legs, &c. to the several uses for which they are designed by Providence.

2d. That there is a propensity to accompany every new discovery, by which I mean the first sight of every new object, with some exclamation.

3rd. That this exclamation is not imitative, except in a rare and very limited sense.

4th. That it is for the most part purely capricious and accidental, admitting of no critical inquiry, except as concerns the superior facility of utterance of certain syllables or sounds.

5th. That the syllable or sound thus uttered becomes a name for the object which called it forth.

As regards the first of these propositions (to which this chapter will be confined), it may be objected by the upholders of the divine origin, that if the use of the tongue in speech were as much a matter of instinct as the application of the other members to their respective purposes, the same degree of efficiency would be exhibited in the result; but that whereas man in a savage state attains in a single life-time to the perfect command of his limbs, his efforts at language are forlorn and hopeless to the last degree, and never advance beyond that condition (say they) until a new direction is given to them by intercourse with civilized nations. This objection, I conceive, can give us no embarrassment. If the fact of speech having no development among savage tribes corresponding to that of their other faculties, be a proof in favour of the theory of divine interposition, the same might be urged with respect to the understanding itself—which I think was never done. But if it is not disputed that Time is the sufficient ripener of the human mind, why should there be a question as to its power to bring the faculty of speech to the same maturity through the same degrees? As to the perfection of the physical powers amongst barbarians—while still no more than “*mutum et turpe pecus*”—it argues nothing but this, that Nature in giving to man his full quota of bodily strength in that condition of his being, has provided him, as her custom is, with the thing most necessary to him;—the luxury of language she reserves for a fitter season. There is no evidence to prove—and vastly improbable it is—that a savage experiences any trouble or perplexity through poverty of speech, or, as we say, is ever “at a loss for a word.” We may rest assured that that little which he desires to communicate, between cries and gestures, he communicates readily enough. But the extension of language is coequal with the extension of the understanding, and as soon as the mind begins to quicken with perception and to seek more earnestly the pleasures of sympathy, it is not long in improving its old resources or devising new expedients. Necessity is not the only mother of invention—Desire operates hardly less powerfully in creating the means of its own gratification; and when our necessities are provided for, our desires usurp their place.

With respect to the assertion, that language makes no progress amongst a people until intercourse with civilized communities gives it the necessary impulse, it seems to be a pure assumption, and to an assumption one can only oppose a doubt. Strongly do I doubt the correctness of the assumption. Yet is this point not hastily to be dismissed, as well because it has been a good deal insisted upon, as because, if it could be substantiated, I confess I think it would needs overturn the theory here contended for. The doctrine then, as far as I understand, is, that language, and the arts, and whatever makes up the sum of human knowledge, has been derived to us from the East, whence issuing it has gradually spread itself over the world. Accordingly, endeavours have been

made to trace all languages to one common source; the connection between the Hebrew, the Phœnician, the Pelasgian, and the Greek, has been studiously laboured; it has been asserted that the Latin was in its origin no more than Æolic Greek, while the modern European languages are only branches from the Latin. If all these relations were clearly made out, instead of being in a great measure open to dispute, the fact would not prove that, in evidence of which it is adduced. For with respect to any one of these derived languages, it is not surely denied that there must have pre-existed some species of oral communication, however imperfect that may have been; the acquired language, then, in any case, must have been a graft—not a plant—and must have superseded its rude predecessor by virtue only of its superior capacity, and by its being ready-made to hand, and not because the latter had no power of cultivation or improvement *in se*. The only kind of evidence, as it seems to me, on which it would be possible to ground a substantial argument against the human origin of language, would be to show that all barbarians when first discovered were literally “*mutum et turpe pecus*,” but if their possession of any aboriginal form of speech whatsoever, any indigenous words, however few be admitted, I cannot but think it a virtual admission of the whole argument—

“*Cadat elusus ratione ruentis acervi.*”

For if mankind have wit enough without direction to possess themselves of the first elements of language, what, in the name of reason, is to prevent them from acquiring the remainder in the same manner? We who say we are civilized, and who count the arts of navigation and of war amongst our accomplishments, transport ourselves to some newly discovered region, where, having reduced the natives to subjection, we give them arts and letters in exchange for liberty, and then say—and they are taught to believe us—that they ought to be vastly obliged to us, for, that if it had not been for the lucky accident of our finding them out and murdering the greater part of their naked fathers, they could never have tasted the blessings of knowledge; and their language, as well as their manners, must inevitably have remained *in statu quo* to doomsday. What a superfluous piece of insolence is this! And this has been the trick played on the conquered by the conquerors ever since the flood! If savage tribes exhibit—and they do exhibit—degrees of difference in their condition, if they are found—not equally—but more or less removed from the point of civilization, it must be accepted as proof sufficient of an indefinite power of advancement; and the same of language. To admit the existence of the *primum mobile*, and question the power of progression, is to deny that the greater includes the less, and to overturn the first principles of ratiocination. That any country in a state of high civilization would be discovered by the explorers of new worlds, was not to be expected. One of the first results of that condition of a country is *emigration*; as ripe fruits shed their seeds, so a ripe country, by a natural effort, shoots off its superabundant population, whence infant states—as from the seed new fruit. If a distant nation had been rising and progressing *pari passu* with ourselves, not only would their motives to colonization have become the same, but curiosity and the spirit of enterprise would, as with us, long since have spread them over the globe, and they would have found us, if we did not find them. The gradual procession of knowledge and humanity out of Holy Land, which history teaches us,—this “march of mind” from East to West,—may very well consist with these opinions. Because it may have pleased God to provide a certain course, if I may say so, for the education of the world, and to ordain that one community shall instruct another till all be perfected in knowledge, we are not therefore warranted in saying—as it has been so confidently said—that no society of men have the power of attaining to that perfection of themselves. The facts are against those who say it: they cannot persuade history to support so absurd a position. Not that history records such a phenomenon as that above imagined

(for many reasons besides those alleged,) but that she presents us with examples innumerable of a natural state of society so far possessed of our own materials of civilization, that it would be the *ne plus ultra* of drivelling vanity to suppose that we were any other-wise important to them, than as useful *forcing* instruments to hasten and facilitate the intellectual season.

I defer to the next chapter some concluding observations on this first head.

## SPECIMENS OF WIT, HUMOUR, AND CRITICISM OF CHARLES LAMB.

### No. IV.

#### MRS BATTLE'S OPINIONS ON WHIST.

[HERE followeth, gentle Reader, the immortal record of Mrs Battle and her whist; a game which the author (as thou wilt see) wished that he could play for ever; and accordingly in the deathless pages of his wit, for ever will he play it.—Ed.]

“A CLEAR fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game.” This was the celebrated wish of old Sarah Battle (now with God) who, next to her devotions, loved a good game at whist. She was none of your luke-warm gamesters, your half-and-half players, who have no objection to take a hand, if you want one to make up a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning; that they like to win one game and lose another; that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card table, but are indifferent whether they play or no; and will desire an adversary who has slipt a wrong card to take it up and play another. These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said, that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing at them.

Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them as I do from her heart and soul, and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took, and gave, no concessions. She hated favours. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight: cut and thrust. She held not her good sword (her cards) “like a dancer.” She sate bolt upright; and neither showed you her cards, nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side—their superstitions; and I have heard her declare, under the rose, that *Hearts* was her favourite suit.

I never in my life—and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it—saw her take out her snuff-box when it was her turn to play; or snuff a candle in the middle of the game; or ring for a servant till it was fairly over. She never introduced, or connived at miscellaneous conversation during its process. As she emphatically observed, “Cards were cards;” and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last-century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand; and who in his excess of candour declared, that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind! She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do,—and she did it. She unbent her mind afterwards—over a book.

Pope was her favourite author: his ‘Rape of the Lock’ her favourite work. She once did me the favour to play over with me (with the cards) his celebrated game of ombre in that poem; and to explain to me how far it agreed with, and in what points it would be found to differ from, *tradrille*. Her illustrations were apposite and poignant; and I had the pleasure of sending the substance of them to Mr Bowles: but I suppose they came too late to be inserted among his ingenious notes upon that author.

Quadrille, she has often told me was her first love; but whist had engaged her maturer esteem.



The former, she said, was showy and spacious, and likely to allure young persons. The uncertainty and quick shifting of partners—a thing which the constancy of whist abhors;—the dazzling supremacy and regal investiture of Spadille—absurd, as she justly observed, in the pure aristocracy of whist, where his crown and garter gave him no proper power above his brother-nobility of the Aces;—the giddy vanity, so taking to the inexperienced, of playing alone;—above all the overpowering attractions of a *Sans Prendre Vole*,—to the triumph of which there is certainly nothing parallel or approaching, in the contingencies of whist;—all these, she would say, make quadrille a game of captivation to the young and enthusiastic. But whist was the *solider* game: that was her word. It was a long meal, not, like quadrille, a feast of snatches. One or two rubbers might co-exist in duration with an evening. They gave time to form rooted friendships, to cultivate steady enmities. She despised the chance-started, capricious and ever-fluctuating alliances of the other. The skirmishes of quadrille, she would say, reminded her of the petty ephemeral embroilments of the little Indian states, depicted by Machiavel; perpetually changing postures and connexions; bitter foes to-day, sugared darlings to-morrow; kissing and scratching in a breath; but the wars of whist were comparable to the long, steady, deep-rooted, rational antipathies of the great French and English nations.

A grave simplicity was what she chiefly admired in her favourite game. There was nothing silly in it, like the *nob* in cribbage—nothing superfluous. No *flashes*—that most irrational of all pleas that a reasonable being can set up;—that anyone should claim four by virtue of holding cards of the same mark and colour, without reference to the playing of the game, or the individual worth or pretensions of the cards themselves! She held this to be a solecism; as pitiful an ambition at cards as alliteration is in authorship. She despised superficiality, and looked deeper than the colours of things.—Suits were soldiers, she would say, and must have a uniformity of array to distinguish them: but what should we say of a foolish squire, who should claim a merit from dressing up his tenantry in red jackets, that never were to be marshalled—never to take the field?—She even wished that whist were more simple than it is; and, in my mind, would have stript it of some appendages, which, in the state of human frailty, may be venially, and even commendably allowed of. She saw no reason for the deciding of the trump by the turn of the card. Why not one suit always trumps?—Why two colours, when the marks of the suits would have sufficiently distinguished them without it?—

“But the eye, my dear madam, is agreeably refreshed with the variety. Man is not a creature of pure reason—he must have his senses delightfully appealed to. We see it in Roman Catholic countries, where the music and the paintings draw in many to worship, whom your quaker spirit of unsensualizing would have kept out. You yourself have a pretty collection of paintings—but confess to me whether, walking in your gallery at Sandham, among those clear Vandykes, or among the Paul Potters in the ante-room, you ever felt your bosom glow with an elegant delight, at all comparable to that you have it in your power to experience most evenings over a well-arranged assortment of the court cards?—the pretty antic habits, like heralds in a procession—the gay triumph-assuring scarlets—the contrasting deadly-killing saffrons—the ‘hoary majesty of spades’—Pam in all his glory!—

“All these might be dispensed with; and, with their naked names upon the drab paste-board, the game might go on very well pictureless. But the beauty of cards would be extinguished for ever. Stripped of all that is imaginative in them, they must degenerate into mere gambling. Imagine a dull deal board, a drum head, to spread them on, instead of that nice verdant carpet (next to Nature’s), fittest arena for those courtly combatants to play their gallant jousts and tourneys in! Exchange those

delicately-turned ivory markers (work of Chinese artist unconscious of their symbol, or as profanely slighting their true application as the arrantest Ephesian journeyman that turned out those little shrines for the goddess)—exchange them for little bits of leather (our ancestors’ money) or chalk and a slate!—”

The old lady, with a smile confessed the soundness of my logic; and to her approbation of my arguments on her favourite topic that evening, I have always fancied myself indebted for the legacy of a curious cribbage-board, made of the finest Sienna marble, which her maternal uncle (old Walter Plumer, whom I have elsewhere celebrated) brought with him from Florence—this, and a trifle of five hundred pounds came to me at her death.

The former bequest (which I do not least value) I have kept with religious care; though she herself, to confess a truth, was never greatly taken with cribbage. It was an essentially vulgar game, I have heard her say,—disputing with her uncle, who was very partial to it. She could never bring her mouth heartily to pronounce “go”—or “that’s a go.” She called it an ungrammatical game. The pegging teased her. I once knew her to forfeit a rubber, (a five dollar stake) because she would not take advantage of the turn-up knave, which would have given it her, but which she must have claimed by the disgraceful tenure of declaring “two for his heels.” There is something extremely genteel in this sort of self-denial. Sarah Battle was a gentlewoman born.

Piquet she held the best game at the cards for two persons, though she would ridicule the pedantry of the terms—such as pique—repique—the capot—they savoured (she thought) of affectation. But games for two, or even three, she never greatly cared for. She loved the quadrate, or square. She would argue thus:—Cards are warfare: the ends are gain, with glory. But cards are war, in disguise of a sport; when single adversaries encounter, the ends proposed are too palpable. By themselves, it is too close a fight; with spectators it is not much bettered. No looker on can be interested, except for a bet, and then it is a mere affair of money; he cares not for your luck sympathetically, or for your play. Three are still worse; a mere naked war of every man against every man, as in cribbage, without league or alliance; or a rotation of petty and contradictory interests, a succession of heartless leagues, and not much more hearty infractions of them, as in *tradrille*.—But in square games (*she meant whist*) all that is possible to be attained in card-playing is accomplished. There are the incentives of profit with honour, common to to every species—though the latter can be but very imperfectly enjoyed in those other games, where the spectator is only feebly a participator. But the parties in whist are spectators and principals too. They are a theatre to themselves, and a looker-on is not wanted. He is rather worse than nothing, and an impertinence. Whist abhors neutrality or interests beyond its sphere. You glory in some surprising stroke of skill or fortune, not because a cold—or even an interested—by-stander witnesses it, but because your partner sympathises in the contingency. You win for two. You triumph for two. Two are exalted. Two again are mortified; which divides their disgrace, as the conjunction doubles (by taking off the invidiousness) your glories. Two losing to two are better reconciled, than one to one in that close butchery. The hostile feeling is weakened by multiplying the channels. War becomes a civil game.—By such reasonings as these the old lady was accustomed to defend her favourite pastime.

No inducement could ever prevail upon her to play at any game where chance entered into the composition, for nothing. Chance, she would argue—and here again admire the subtlety of her conclusion!—chance is nothing but where something else depends upon it. It is obvious that cannot be glory. What rational cause of exultation could it give to a man to turn up size ace a hundred times together by himself? or before spectators, where no stake was depending? Make a lottery of a hundred thousand tickets with but one fortunate number—

and what possible principle of our nature, except stupid wonderment, could it gratify to gain that number as many times successively, without a prize?—Therefore she disliked the mixture of chance in backgammon, where it was not played for money. She called it foolish, and those people idiots who were taken with a lucky hit, under such circumstances. Games of pure skill were as little to her fancy. Played for a stake, they were a mere system of over-reaching. Played for glory, they were a mere setting of one man’s wit,—his memory, or combination-faculty rather—against another’s; like a mock engagement at a review, bloodless and profitless.—She could not conceive a game wanting the sprightly infusion of chance,—the handsome excuses of good fortune. Two people playing at chess in a corner of a room, whilst whist was stirring in the centre, would inspire her with insufferable horror and ennui. Those well-cut similitudes of castles and knights, the *imagery* of the board, she would argue (and I think in this case justly), were intirely misplaced and senseless. Their hard head-contests can in no instance ally with the fancy. They reject form and colour. A pencil and dry slate, she fused to say, were the proper arena for such combatants.

To those puny objectors against cards, as nurturing the bad passions, she would retort, that man is a gaming animal. He must be always trying to get the better in something or other:—that this passion can scarcely be more safely expended than upon a game at cards: that cards are a temporary illusion; in truth, a mere drama; for we do but play at being mightily concerned, where a few idle shillings are at stake, yet, during the illusion, we are as mightily concerned as those whose stake is crowns and kingdoms. They are a sort of dream-fighting; much ado; great battling, and little bloodshed; mighty means for disproportioned ends; quite as diverting, and a great deal more innoxious, than many of those more serious games of life, which men play, without esteeming them to be such.—

With great deference to the old lady’s judgment on these matters, I think I have experienced some moments in my life, when playing at cards for nothing has even been agreeable. When I am in sickness, or not in the best spirits, I sometimes call for the cards, and play a game at piquet for love with my cousin Bridget—Bridget Elia.

I grant there is something sneaking in it; but with a tooth-ache, or a sprained ancle,—when you are subdued and humble,—you are glad to put up with an inferior spring of action.

There is such a thing in nature, I am convinced, as *sick whist*.—

I grant it is not the highest style of man—I deprecate the manes of Sarah Battle—she lives not, alas! to whom I should apologise.—

At such times, those terms which my old friend objected to, come in as something admissible.—I love to get a tierce or a quatorze, though they mean nothing. I am subdued to an inferior interest. Those shadows of winning amuse me.

That last game I had with my sweet cousin (I capotted her)—(dare I tell thee, how foolish I am?)—I wished it might have lasted for ever, though we gained nothing, and lost nothing, though it was a mere shade of play: I would be content to go on in that idle folly for ever. The pipkin should be ever boiling, that was to prepare the gentle lenitive to my foot, which Bridget was doomed to apply after the game was over: and, as I do not much relish appliances, there it should ever bubble. Bridget and I should be ever playing.

#### IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUALS TO ONE ANOTHER.

Widely separated as they may be, there is no case where the influence possessed by any individual, however mean, over any other individual, however mighty, is really null, and unworthy of all regard. The mouse in the fable, releasing the lion from bondage, is an exemplification of the possible dependence of the strong upon the weak.—*Bentham’s Deontology*.

## THE WEEK.

## PERSONAL PORTRAITS OF EMINENT MEN.

DANTE.

[FROM 'Lives of Eminent Italians.'—This summary account of the great Italian is one of the best fitted to give a popular and true idea of him, that we have seen.]

DANTE's poem is certainly neither the greatest nor the best in the world; but it is, perhaps, the most extraordinary one which resolute intellect ever planned, or persevering talents successfully executed. It stands alone; and must be read and judged according to rules and immunities adapted to its peculiar structure, plot, and purpose, formed upon principles affording scope to the exercise of the highest powers, with little regard to precedent. If these principles, then, have intrinsic excellence, and the work be found uniformly consistent with them, fulfilling to the utmost the aims of the author, the 'Divina Commedia' must be allowed to stand among the proudest trophies of original genius, challenging, encountering, and overcoming unparalleled difficulties. Though the fields of action, or rather of vision, are nominally Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise,—the Paradise, Purgatory, and Hell of Dante, with all their terrors, and splendours, and preternatural fictions, are but representations of scenes transacted on earth, and characters that lived antecedently or contemporaneously with himself. Though altogether out of the world, the whole is of the world. Men and women seem fixed in eternal torments, passing through purifying flames, or exalted to celestial beatitude; yet in all these situations they are what they were; and it is their former history, more than their present happiness, hope, or despair, which constitutes, through a hundred cantos, the interest awakened and kept up by the successive exhibition of more than a thousand individuals, actors and sufferers. Of every one of these something terrible or touching is intimated or told briefly at the utmost, but frequently by mere hints of narrative, or gleams of allusion, which excite curiosity in the breast of the reader, who is surprised at the poet's forbearance, when, in the notes of commentators, he finds complex, strange and fearful circumstances, on which a modern versifier or novelist would extend pages, treated here as ordinary events on which it would be impertinent to dwell. These, in the author's own age, were generally understood; the bulk of the materials being gathered up during a period of restlessness and confusion among the republican states of Italy.

Hence, though the first appearance of the 'Divina Commedia,' in any intelligible edition, is repulsive from the multitude of notes, and the text is not seldom difficult and dark with the oracular words, yet will the toil and patience of any reader be well repaid, who perseveringly proceeds but a little way, quietly referring, as occasion may require, from the obscurity of the original to the illustrations below; for when he returns from the latter to the former (as though his own eye had been refreshed with new light, the darkness having been in it, and not in the verse), what was colourless as a cloud is radiant with beauty, and what before was undefined in form, becomes exquisitely precise and symmetrical from comprehending in so small a compass so vast a variety of thought, feeling, or fact. Dante, in this respect, must be studied as an author in a dead language by a learner, or rather as one who employs a living language on forgotten themes; then will his style grow easier and clearer as the reader grows more and more acquainted with his subject, his manner, and his materials. For whatever be the corruption of the text (which, perhaps, has never been sufficiently collated) the remoteness of the allusions, of our countrymen's want of that previous knowledge of almost everything treated upon which best prepares the mind for the perception and highest enjoyment of poetical beauty and poetical pleasure, Dante will be found, in reality, one of the most clear, minute, and accurate writers in sentiment, as he is one of the most perfectly natural and graphic painters to the life of persons, characters, and actions. His draughts

have the freedom of etchings, and the sharpness of proof impressions. His poem is well worth all the pains which the most indolent reader may take to master it.

Boccaccio, the earliest of his biographers, though not the most authentic, says, that in person Dante was of middle stature; that he stooped a little from the shoulders, and was remarkable for his firm and graceful gait. He always dressed in a manner peculiarly becoming his rank and years. His visage was long, with an aquiline nose, and eyes rather full than small, his cheek-bones large, and his upper-lip projecting beyond the under; his complexion was dark; his beard and hair black, thick and curled; and his countenance exhibited a confirmed expression of melancholy and thoughtfulness. Hence, one day, at Verona, as he passed a gateway, where several ladies were seated, one of them exclaimed, "There goes the man who can take a walk to hell, and back again, whenever he pleases, and bring us news of everything that is doing there." On which another, with equal sagacity, added, "That must be true; for don't you see how his beard is frizzled, and his face browned, with the heat and the smoke below." The words, whether spoken in sport or silliness, were overheard by the poet, who, as the fair slanderers meant no malice, was quite willing that they should please themselves with their own fancies. Towards the opening of the 'Purgatorio' there is an allusion to the soil which his face had contracted on his journey with Virgil through the nether world:—

"High Morn had triumph'd o'er the glimmering dawn

Which fled before her, so that I discern'd  
The tremble of the ocean from afar:  
We walk'd along the solitary plain,  
Like men retracing their erratic steps,  
Who think all lost till they regain the path.  
Arriving where the dew-drops with the sun  
Contended, and lay thick beneath the shade,  
Both hands my master delicately spread  
Upon the grass: aware of his intent,  
I turn'd to him my tearful countenance,  
And thence he wiped away the dusky hue  
With which the infernal air had sullied it."\*

In his studies, Dante was so eager, earnest, and indefatigable, that his wife and family often complained of his unsocial habits. Boccaccio mentions, that once when he was at Sienna, having unexpectedly found at a shop-window a book which he had not seen, but had long coveted, he placed himself on a bench before the door, at nine o'clock in the morning, and never lifted up his eyes till vesper, when he had run through the whole contents with such intense application, as to have totally disregarded the festivities of processions and music which had been passing through the streets the greater part of the day; and when questioned about what had happened in his presence, he denied having had any knowledge of anything but what he was reading. As might be expected from his other habits, he rarely spoke, except when personally addressed, or strongly moved, and then his words were few, well chosen, weighty, and expressed in tones of voice accommodated to the subject. Yet, when it was required, his eloquence broke forth with spontaneous felicity, splendour, and exuberance of diction, imagery, and thought.

Dante delighted in music. The most natural and touching incident in his 'Purgatorio' is the interview between himself and his friend Casella, an eminent singer in his day, who must, notwithstanding, have been forgotten within his century, but for the extraordinary good fortune which had befallen him, to be celebrated by two of the greatest poets of their respective countries (Dante and Milton), from whose pages his name cannot soon perish.

Choosing to excel in all the elegancies of life, as well as in gentlemanly exercises and intellectual

proWess, Dante attached himself to painting not less than to music, and practised it with the pencil (not indeed so triumphantly as with the pen, his picture poetry being unrivalled), with sufficient facility and grace to make it a favourite amusement in private; and none can believe that he could amuse himself with what was worthless. His four celebrated contemporaries, Cimabue, Odorigi, Franco Bolognese, and Giotto, are all honourably mentioned by him in the eleventh Canto of the 'Purgatorio.'

There is an interesting allusion to the employment which he loved in the 'Vita Nuova':—"On the day that completed the year after this lady (Beatrice) had been received among the denizens of eternal life, while I was sitting alone, and recalling her form to my remembrance, I drew an angel on a certain tablet," &c. It may be incidentally observed, that Dante's angels are often painted with unsurpassable beauty, as well as inexhaustible variety of delineation throughout his poems, especially in Canto ix of the 'Inferno,' and Cantos ii, viii, xii, xv, xviii, xxiv of the 'Purgatorio.' Take six lines of one of these portraits; though the inimitable original must consume the unequal version:—

"A noi venia la creatura bella,  
Bianco vestita, e ne la faccia quale  
Par, tremolando, mattutina stella:  
Le braccia aperse, e indi aperse l'ale;  
Disse: Venite; qui son presso i gradi,  
E agevolmente omai si sale."

DELL' PURGATORIO, Canto XII.

"That being came, all beautiful, to meet us,  
Clad in white raiment, and the morning star  
Appear'd to tremble in his countenance;  
His arms he spread, and then he spread his wings  
And cried, 'Come on, the steps are near at hand,  
And here the ascent is easy.'"

Leonardo Aretino, who had seen Dante's handwriting, mentions, with no small commendation, that the letters were long, slender, and exceedingly distinct,—the characteristics of what is called in ornamental writing a fine Italian hand. The circumstance may seem small, but it is not insignificant as a finishing stroke in the portraiture of one who, though he was the first poet unquestionably, and not the least philosopher, was also one of the most accomplished gentlemen of his age.

## CHARACTERS OF SHAKSPEARE'S PLAYS.

BY WILLIAM HAZLITT.

NO. XII.—TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

THIS is one of the most loose and desultory of our author's plays: it rambles on just at it happens, but it overtakes, together with some indifferent matter, a prodigious number of fine things in its way. Troilus himself is no character: he is merely a common lover: but Cressida and her uncle Pandarus are hit off with proverbial truth. By the speeches given to the leaders of the Grecian host, Nestor, Ulysses, Agamemnon, Achilles, Shakspeare seems to have known them as well as if he had been a spy sent by the Trojans into the enemy's camp—to say nothing of their being very lofty examples of didactic eloquence. The following is a very stately and spirited declamation:—

"ULYSSES. Troy, yet upon her basis, had been down,  
And the great Hector's sword had lack'd a master,  
But for these instances.  
The specialty of rule hath been neglected.

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre,  
Observe degree, priority, and place,  
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,  
Office, and custom, in all line of order:  
And therefore is the glorious planet, Sol,  
In noble eminence, enthron'd and spher'd  
Amidst the other, whose medicinal-eye

\* L' alba vinceva l' ora mattutina  
Che fuggia 'nnanzi, sì che di lontano  
Conobbi il tremolar della marina.  
Noi andavam per lo solingo piano  
Com' uom, che torna alla smarrita strada  
Che 'nfino ad essa li pare ire in vano.



Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,  
And posts, like the commandment of a king,  
Sans check, to good and bad. But, when the  
planets,

In evil mixture to disorder wander,  
What plagues and what portents! what mutinies!  
What raging of the sea! shaking of earth!  
Commotion in the winds! frights, changes, horrors,  
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate  
The unity and married calm of states  
Quite from their fixture! O, when degree is shaken,  
(Which is the ladder to all high designs)  
The enterprize is sick! How could communities,  
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,  
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,  
The primogenitive and due of birth  
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,  
(But by degree) stand in authentic place?  
Take but degree away, untune that string,  
And hark what discord follows! each thing meets  
In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters  
Would lift their bosoms higher than the shores,  
And make a sop of all this solid globe:  
Strength would be lord of imbecility,  
And the rude son would strike his father dead:  
Force would be right; or, rather, right and wrong  
(Between whose endless jar Justice resides)

Would lose their names, and so would Justice too,  
Then everything includes itself in power,  
Power into will, will into appetite;  
And appetite (an universal wolf,  
So doubly seconded with will and power)  
Must make perforce an universal prey,  
And last, eat up himself. Great Agamemnon,  
This chaos, when degree is suffocate,  
Follows the choking:

And this neglect of degree it is,  
That by a pace goes backward, in a purpose  
It hath to climb. The general's disdain'd  
By him one step below; he, by the next;  
That next, by him beneath: so every step,  
Exempl'd by the first pace that is sick  
Of his superior, grows to an envious fever  
Of pale and bloodless emulation;  
And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot,  
Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length,  
Troy in our weakness lives, not in her strength."

It cannot be said of Shakspeare, as was said of some  
one, that he was "without o'erflowing full." He  
was full even to o'erflowing. He gave heaped mea-  
sure, running over. This was his greatest fault.  
He was only in danger "of losing distinction in his  
thoughts" (to borrow his own expression)

"As doth a battle when they charge on heaps  
The enemy flying."

There is another passage, the speech of Ulysses to  
Achilles, showing him the thankless nature of popu-  
larity, which has a still greater depth of moral obser-  
vation and richness of illustration than the former.  
It is long, but worth the quoting. The sometimes  
giving an intire extract from the unacted plays  
of our author may with one class of readers have  
almost the use of restoring a lost passage; and may  
serve to convince another class of critics, that the  
poet's genius was not confined to the production of  
stage effect by preternatural means:—

"ULYSSES. Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his  
back,  
Wherein he puts alms for Oblivion;  
A great-siz'd monster of ingratitude:  
Those scraps are good deeds past,  
Which are devour'd as fast as they are made,  
Forgot as soon as done: Perseverance, dear my lord,  
Keeps Honour bright: to have done, is to hang  
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail  
In monumental mockery. Take the instant way;  
For Honour travels in a strait so narrow,  
Where one but goes abreast; keep then the path,  
For Emulation hath a thousand sons,  
That one by one pursue; if you give way,  
Or hedge aside from the direct forth-right,  
Like to an entered tide, they all rush by,

And leave you hindmost;—  
Or, like a gallant horse fall'n in first rank,  
O'er-run and trampled on: then what they do in  
present,

"Tho' less than yours in past, must o'ertop yours:  
For Time is like a fashionable host,  
That slightly shakes his parting guest by th' hand,  
And with his arms out-stretch'd, as he would fly,  
Grasps in the corner: the Welcome ever smiles,  
And Farewell goes out sighing. O, let not vir-  
tue seek

Remuneration for the thing it was; for beauty, wit,  
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,  
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all  
To envious and calumniating time:  
One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.  
That all, with one consent, praise new-born gauds,  
Tho' they are made and moulded of things past,  
The present eye praises the present object.  
Then marvel not, thou great and complete man,  
That all the Greeks begin to worship Ajax;  
Since things in motion sooner catch the eye,  
Than what not stirs. The cry went out on thee,  
And still it might, and yet it may again,  
If thou wouldst not entomb thyself alive,  
And ease thy reputation in thy tent."

The throng of images in the above lines is prodi-  
gious; and though they sometimes jostle against  
one another, they everywhere raise and carry on the  
feeling, which is metaphysically true and profound.  
The debates between the Trojan chiefs on the res-  
toring of Helen are full of knowledge of human  
motives and character. Troilus enters well into the  
philosophy of war when he says in answer to some-  
thing that falls from Hector,—

"Why there you touch'd the life of our design:  
Were it not glory that we more affected,  
Than the performance of our heaving spleens,  
I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood  
Spent more in her defence. But, worthy Hector,  
She is a theme of honour and renown,  
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds."

The character of Hector, in the few slight indica-  
tions which appear of it, is made very amiable. His  
death is sublime, and shows in a striking light the  
mixture of barbarity and heroism of the age. The  
threats of Achilles are fatal; they carry their own  
means of execution with them:—

"Come here about me, you my Myrmidons,  
Mark what I say.—Attend me where I wheel:  
Strike not a stroke, but keep yourselves in breath;  
And when I have the bloody Hector found,  
Empale him with your weapons round about:  
In fellest manner execute your arms.  
Follow me, sirs, and my proceeding eye."

He then finds Hector and slays him, as if he had  
been hunting down a wild beast. There is some-  
thing revolting as well as terrific in the ferocious  
coolness with which he singles out his prey: nor  
does the splendour of the achievement reconcile us  
to the cruelty of the means.

The characters of Cressida and Pandarus are very  
amusing and instructive. The disinterested willing-  
ness of Pandarus to serve his friend in an affair  
which lies next his heart is immediately brought  
forward. "Go thy way, Troilus, go thy way; had  
I a sister were a grace, or a daughter were a goddess,  
he should take his choice. O admirable man! Paris!  
Paris is dirt to him, and I warrant Helen, to change,  
would give money to boot." This is the language  
he addresses to his niece: nor is she much behind-  
hand in coming into the plot. Her head is as light  
and fluttering as her heart. "It is the prettiest  
villain; she fetches her breath so short as a new-ta'en  
sparrow." Both characters are originals, and quite  
different from what they are in Chaucer. In Chaucer,  
Cressida is represented as a grave, sober, considerate  
personage (a widow—he cannot tell her age, nor  
whether she has children or no) who has an alter-  
nate eye to her character, her interest, and her plea-  
sure: Shakspeare's Cressida is a giddy girl, an un-

practised jilt, who falls in love with Troilus, as she  
afterwards deserts him, from mere levity and  
thoughtlessness of temper. She may be wooed  
and won to anything, and from anything, at a  
moment's warning: the other knows very well  
what she would be at, and sticks to it, and  
is more governed by substantial reasons than by  
caprice or vanity. Pandarus again, in Chaucer's  
story, is a friendly sort of go-between, tolerably busy,  
officious, and forward in bringing matters to bear:  
but in Shakspeare he has "a stamp exclusive and  
professional:" he wears the badge of his trade; he  
is a regular knight of the game. The difference  
of the manner in which the subject is treated arises  
perhaps less from intention, than from the different  
genius of the two poets. There is no *double entendre*  
in the characters of Chaucer: they are either quite  
serious or quite comic. In Shakspeare the ludicrous  
and ironical are constantly blended with the stately  
and the impassioned. We see Chaucer's characters  
as they saw themselves, not as they appeared to  
others or might have appeared to the poet. He is  
as deeply implicated in the affairs of his personages  
as they could be themselves. He had to go a long  
journey with each of them, and became a kind of  
necessary confidant. There is little relief, or light  
and shade in his pictures. The conscious smile is  
not seen lurking under the brow of grief or impa-  
tience. Everything with him is intense and impa-  
tinuous—a working out of what went before.—  
Shakspeare never committed himself to his charac-  
ters. He trifled, laughed, or wept with them as he  
chose. He has no prejudices for or against them;  
and it seems a matter of perfect indifference whether  
he shall be in jest or earnest. According to him  
"the web of our lives is of a mingled yarn, good and  
ill together." His genius was dramatic, as Chaucer's  
was historical. He saw both sides of a question,  
the different views taken of it according to the dif-  
ferent interests of the parties concerned, and he was  
at once an actor and spectator in the scene. If any-  
thing, he is too various and flexible; too full of  
transitions, of glancing lights, of salient points. If  
Chaucer followed up his subject too doggedly, per-  
haps Shakspeare was too volatile and heedless. The  
Muse's wing too often lifted him off his feet. He  
made infinite excursions to the right and left.

"He hath done  
Mad and fantastic execution,  
Engaging and redeeming of himself  
With such a careless force and forceless care,  
As if that luck in every spite of cunning  
Bad him win all."

Chaucer attended chiefly to the real and natural,  
that is, to the involuntary and inevitable impressions  
on the mind in given circumstances: Shakspeare  
exhibited also the possible and the fantastical,—not  
only what things are in themselves, but whatever  
they might seem to be, their different reflections,  
their endless combinations. He lent his fancy, wit,  
invention, to others, and borrowed their feelings in  
return. Chaucer excelled in the force of habitual  
sentiment; Shakspeare added to it every variety of  
passion, every suggestion of thought or accident.  
Chaucer described external objects with the eye of  
a painter, or he might be said to have embodied  
them with the hand of a sculptor, every part is so  
thoroughly made out, and tangible:—Shakspeare's  
imagination threw over them a lustre

"Prouder than when blue Iris bends."

Everything in Chaucer has a downright reality.  
A simile or a sentiment is as if it were given in upon  
evidence. In Shakspeare the commonest matter-of-  
fact has a romantic grace about it; or seems to float  
with the breath of imagination in a freer element.  
No one could have more depth of feeling or observa-  
tion than Chaucer, but he wanted resources of inven-  
tion to lay open the stores of nature or the human  
heart with the same radiant light, that Shakspeare  
has done. However fine or profound the thought,  
we know what was coming, whereas the effect of  
reading Shakspeare is "like the eye of vassalage  
encountering majesty." Chaucer's mind was con-

secutive, rather than discursive. He arrived at truth through a certain process; Shakspeare saw everything by intuition. Chaucer had great variety of power, but he could do only one thing at once. He set himself to work on a particular subject. His ideas were kept separate, labelled, ticketed and parcelled out in a set form, in pews and compartments by themselves. They did not play into one another's hands. They did not re-act upon one another, as the blower's breath moulds the yielding glass. There is something hard and dry in them. What is the most wonderful thing in Shakspeare's faculties is their excessive sociability, and how they gossiped and compared notes together.

We must conclude this criticism; and we will do it with a quotation or two. One of the most beautiful passages in Chaucer's tale is the description of Cresseide's first avowal of her love:—

"And as the new abashed nightingale,  
That stineth first when she beginneth sing,  
When that she heareth any herde's tale,  
Or in the hedges any wight stirring,  
And, after, sicker doth her voice outting;  
Right so Cresseide, when that her dread stent,  
Opened her heart, and told him her intent."

See also the two next stanzas, and particularly that divine one beginning

"Her armes small, her back both straight and  
soft," &c.

Compare this with the following speech of Troilus to Cressida in the play.

"O, that I thought it could be in a woman;  
And if it can, I will presume in you,  
To feed for aye her lamp and flame of love,  
To keep her constancy in plight and youth,  
Out-living beauties out-ward, with a mind  
That doth renew swifter than blood decays.  
Or, that persuasion could but thus convince me,  
That my integrity and truth to you  
Might be affronted with the match and weight  
Of such a winnow'd purity in love;  
How were I then uplifted! But alas,  
I am as true as Truth's simplicity,  
And simpler than the infancy of Truth."

These passages may not seem very characteristic at first sight, though we think they are so. We will give two, that cannot be mistaken. Patroclus says to Achilles,—

"Rouse yourself; and the weak wanton Cupid  
Shall from your neck unloose his amorous fold,  
And from a dew-drop from the lion's mane,  
Be shook to air."

Troilus, addressing the God of Day on the approach of the morning that parts him from Cressida, says with much scorn,—

"What! proffer'st thou thy light here for to sell?  
Go, sell it them that smallé selés grave."

If nobody but Shakspeare could have written the former, nobody but Chaucer would have thought of the latter.—Chaucer was the most literal of poets, as Richardson was of prose-writers.

We have much pleasure in inserting the following literary notice which has been sent us. In the press, 'Corn Law Rhymes.' The third volume of the works of Ebenezer Elliott will appear in the ensuing month. Amongst its contents will be found some of the earliest productions of this talented writer, without any political allusions,—productions which were almost unheeded at the time of their publication.—Southey alone addressing him to this effect: "There is power in the least; serious of these tales, but the higher you pitch your tone the better you succeed. Thirty years ago they would have made your reputation; thirty years hence the world will wonder that they did not do so."

## FINE ARTS.

*Wanderings through North Wales, by Thomas Roscoe, embellished with highly finished Engravings, by Wm. Radcliffe, from Drawings made expressly for this work, by Cattermole, Cox, and Creswick. Part I. London. Tilt; Simpkin and Marshall.*

MR RADCLIFFE'S engravings in the Part before us are a little hard, with a degree of coarseness and flatness in the fore-ground; but they are distinct, and not unpleasing in the effect. 'Caunant Mawr,' after Creswick, is a striking scene. 'Langollen Valley' is a lovely scene, and makes one think directly of its 'Maid' and her 'contented' Shepherd. Cattermole's 'Death of Llewellyn' is spirited; but not very carefully drawn.

*Poems, with Illustrations, by Louisa Anne Twamley. London. Tilt.*

MISS TWAMLEY urges that the illustrations to her poems are her first attempt at etching on copper; she need scarcely have done so, for they are executed with much feeling and talent, and bear no signs of incapacity or immaturity. They consist of landscapes and flower-pieces. Of the landscapes, we prefer Tintern Abbey, which we never saw look better on paper; more venerable or picturesque; and a friend, who has visited the veritable edifice, praises it for its fidelity. The flower-piece immediately following it is still better in point of execution; it is drawn with great freedom and feeling, and the blending and variety of the tints is very happily caught. Something will be said of the poetry in another number.

## TO F. M. W.

WITH A QUARTO EDITION OF LADY RACHEL RUSSELL'S LETTERS.

OH more than Russell in thy fortitude,  
And in thy love too, capable of more,  
Say, either may we bless or must deplore  
The lot which makes thy evil and our good.  
For, Lady, had the silken lap of ease  
Nursed the charms thy friends so doat upon,  
Then hadst thou not from adverse fortune won  
The triumph which a chastened heart decrees,  
For hadst thou known the subtle bands that knit  
Into one web meek feeling and high thought,  
Making the soul a holy garment, wrought  
With nicest art, magnificently fit—  
Then unto us thy love had only brought  
The grace of manners and the charm of wit.

T. F. T.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

THE enlarged copy of Mr Landor's ode will appear in our next. Its insertion has been delayed by a provoking accident, which has conspired, we fear, with another hindrance, to make us seem very unaccountable and thankless in the eyes of the fair Correspondent by whom it was forwarded. But we have been hoping, day by day, to be able to beg her acceptance of a little volume, which would have accompanied our letter of explanation; and in case this volume does not appear before the present Number of our JOURNAL, we hereby mention the circumstance that she may see we are not quite so absurd as she might otherwise reasonably imagine.

We shall be glad to hear again from H. F.

We cordially thank the gentleman who has written to us so kindly about the LONDON JOURNAL, and whose letter inclosed some of the poems of Sir Richard Fanshawe, &c. He will see that we are not forgetful.

The MS. sent us by Mr J. will be attended to at our very first leisure.

We are much mistaken if we have not inserted some article written by J. M. C. Will he favour us with copy or copies of some later communications, in case they have been mislaid?

Our friend G. H. L. seems to be full of good feeling, and fancy too; but he is in too great a hurry both with his verse and prose, and therefore writes at

too great length.—He reminds us of the letter-writer, who said, "Excuse my being so long, but I have not time to be shorter." Is this our friend's case? At present he wants concentration; and must also study his versification a little more. He is in such haste to live in his pleasant bowers, that he must needs inhabit them, before they are built!

The writer of a letter in pencil, who notices the doctrine of Berkeley, is, we take it, not the same Correspondent who made the quotation alluded to. We have two Readers who seem to have objections to pen and ink. With regard to Berkeley's arguments we would recommend him to read them for himself in the philosopher's works. He would find them very amusing at least, and, we suspect, very startling. And we should be glad to hear from him afterwards on the subject, for our own acquaintance with them was both partial and hasty.

AN OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN will probably have seen the announcement of 'Captain Sword and Captain Pen' before this answer appears. At all events, it will be speedily published by Mr Knight. His other query we cannot notice, because it would trench upon the forbidden ground of advertisement. We are much flattered by his idea of the "Series" he speaks of.

Agreeably to our wish to avoid all possible themes of controversy, we are sorry that the mention of the "Clergyman" in 'Sunday in the Suburbs' was not omitted. F., who takes such a kindly interest in our pages, is informed that the article was written some time back, and the passage, on a hasty review of it, overlooked.

What S. J. says upon 'Love and Matrimony' is very true, and does him honour; but we fear to open our columns to all that may be said on this subject.

We agree with all the opinions expressed in the letter of X; but has he not made his 'Gipsy's Song' somewhat too intimate with the language and luxuries of high living?

Thanks to GODFREY GRAFTON; who will hear further from us.

The printed articles on Mr Lamb reached us unfortunately too late to be made use of in our present number. Due attention shall be paid to them in our next. Meantime we must observe that the writer is under a great mistake respecting the absence of some of Mr Hazlitt's friends, when his funeral took place.

We will not do venerable JOHN PACEY the injustice of publishing the lines sent us by the gentleman who gives us the following account of him, because the homeliness of their attire may not allow everybody to pay honour enough to their spirit; but no one will misunderstand the reverend and living piece of poetry here presented us in the person of a cheerful old man of eighty, rendered superior to his adversity by a good conscience and a mind willing to look around it for sources of comfort:—

"The author of the accompanying trifles, John Pacey, now eighty years of age, was born in the village of Charlton-Kings, Gloucestershire, of honest and industrious parents. He was apprenticed at an early age to a laborious trade, which he has, however, with commendable industry, pursued until within these last few years, when age and infirmities prevented his further exertions, and drove him to seek refuge from penury and distress in the cultivation of a little vegetable-garden. His wants are few and easily supplied; a life of industry has rendered him frugal and abstinent, while honesty and good-feeling have preserved him in the paths of sobriety and rectitude. He married at the early age of twenty-one, and has decently brought up seven children. His eldest son is an object of great compassion, being alike infirm in body and imbecile in mind; he is dependant upon the kindness of his parents, not only for the necessities of life, but also for his actual support,—he is helpless. Notwithstanding this unusual clog, poor old Pacey bears up under the burdens of existence, is cheerful and contented, and even bestows his leisure hours to the cultivation of an humble and amusing taste for poetry."

LONDON: Published by H. HOOPER, Pall Mall East, and supplied to Country Agents by C. KNIGHT, Ludgate-street.

From the Steam-Press of C. & W. RAYNELL, Little Pultney-street.